

The weekly Torah Portion BeShalach tells the story of the Exodus of the Children of Israel from Egypt, the Egyptian effort under Pharaoh to get them back, and of a number of miracles: the miracle of drowning the Egyptian army and their chariots and horses who were engulfed in the Red Sea, the Song of the sea, the miracle of turning bitter water into sweet water, the miracles of the Manna and the quails and the miraculous successful battle against Amalek.

In this short comment (Vort) I ask to draw your attention to a **unique text phenomenon** in this weekly portion according to my humble opinion, namely that **most Jewish Holidays are referred to in this portion**. Usually a weekly portion deals with one or two subjects and the text is relevant only to one or two Jewish Holidays. Let us see which Holidays one may see indicated in the BeShalach weekly portion:

- **Rosh HaShanah** (The New Year) and **Yom Kippur** (The Day of Atonement) : The Song of the Sea is read in the prayers every Shabbat and also on Yom Kippur by which fact we understand that the Wise Old Rabbis (who set up the canon of the prayers) saw the direct correlation of the weekly portion (namely the Song of the Sea) with the Shabbat and the Yom Kippur. In the weekly portion BeShalach in the book of Exodus in chapter 15 in verse 26 the Law of the LORD is mentioned as a benchmark for the Judgement by the LORD of the behaviour of the Israelites. The prayers of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur are based on the essentials formulated in this weekly portion BeShalach: "Who is like unto thee, O LORD" and that one has to pray for the LORD to provide water and food and health and liberty. These are among the essential prayers of the Rosh HaShana. In the book of Exodus in chapter 16 in verse 1 the Israelites arrived at Eilam where there were 12 wells of water and seventy palm trees. They remind of the 12 tribes of Israel and the 70 Wise Men of the Sanhedrin judging the people of Israel. In chapter 16 verse 10 it says "and the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud." During the Temple era this appearance of the glory of the LORD was awaited at the end of the prayers for the new year and after the High Priest went into the Kodesh HaKodashim (Holy of Holies) asking for forgiveness for all the nation and for their lives and well-being in the new year.
- **Sukkot**: In the weekly portion the Sukkot (Tabernacles) are mentioned specifically in chapter 13 verse 20 and the **Clouds of Glory** are mentioned a few times (for example in the book of Exodus 16, vers 7 and 10). They are related to the Holiday of Sukkot (Tabernacles). The various subjects in this weekly portion which relate to **water** and joy resemble to the Simchat Torah celebrations in Jerusalem which were combined with the Simchat Beit HaShoeva, The Joy of the waters from the well of Shoeva in Jerusalem. The Israelites first were happy that the waters of the Red Sea divided when they escaped Pharaoh and his horses and chariots. And just shortly after escaping Egypt the bitter water in Mara in Sinai were miraculously turned into sweet waters. So there is a clear correlation between the prayers and waters and final joy of water in the weekly portion BeShalach and the Holiday of Simchat Torah at the end of Sukkot.

- **Shabbat**: In the book of Exodus 16, verses 23-30 the Children of Israel are instructed to honor the Shabbat when they are told not to collect Manna on the seventh day. And a number of elements of the text of the BeShalach weekly portion are integrated as the standard prayer texts of every Shabbat. So we have the correlation to the weekly portion.

- **Chanukkah**: Chanukkah is the Holiday of lights celebrating the religious liberty regained by the Jewish revolt under the leadership of Jehuda **HaMaccabee** (Judah the Maccabee) against the Greek king Antiochus the IV, Epiphanes in 164 b.c.. His nickname, 'Maccabee', Jehuda got since he called upon the Israelites to stand up and to rebel by the quoting Moses from the weekly portion **BeShalach in chapter 15 in verse 11** "Mi kamocha baElim Adonai" (The initials of these words in Hebrew are the four letters making מִכְּבִי Maccabee.) Judah's call quoted Mose saying "Who is like unto thee, O LORD" (Standard King James version of the Bible translation). So BeShalach correlates to Chanukkah.

- **Tu BiShvat**: Tu means in Hebrew 15. The Holiday is on the **15th** of the month of Shevat. In our weekly portion of BeShalach in **Chapter 15** in verse 2 in the second sentence of the famous Song of the Glory of the Sea the name of the LORD is stated with the two Hebrew letter yud י and he ה. The **Gimatria** (number value of Hebrew letters) of the two letters is **15**. So we have the correlation to TuBiShvat.

- **Purim** is referred to by the battle against **Amalek** in the Book of Exodus chapter 17 verses 8-16. As we know Haman haAgagi of the **Book of Esther** was a descendant of Amalek. So the struggle of Esther and Mordechai against Haman's decree to kill all Jews in the 127 countries under the Kingdom of Madai relates to the repeated efforts of Amalek to annihilate the people of Israel. Haman failed. There upon the Holiday of Purim is celebrated ever since.

- **Pesach** and **Chag HaMatzot** are easily related to by the weekly portion BeShalach dealing with the events of the **Exodus of the Children of Israel from Egypt**.

- **Israel's Independence Day**: The story of the battle against Amalek under the military command of Jehoshua (Joshua) is a reference to the later modern struggle of the people of Israel to regain independence in the Promised Land. David Ben Gurion and the modern founders of the State of Israel decided that the emblem of the state of Israel will remind of Moses being supported by Ahron and Chur supporting his hands during his prayer for God to let Joshua and the troops win against Amalek. **The Menorah** (The Seven Arm Temple Lamp) reminds of the prayers to God and the **two branches of an olive tree** on the two sides of the Menorah in the emblem remind of the supporting of Ahron and Chur standing beside Moses during his prayer.

- **Shavuoth**: By giving the instructions of the Shabbat actually the preparation of the **Ten Commandments** started. The Holiday of getting the Torah in the form of the Ten Commandments is Shavuot. The second reference is in that the seven weeks leading to Shavuot start in **Pesach**, which is the Holiday celebrating the **Exodus of Egypt**.